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ABSTRACT

This brief report summarizes a longer report with the same title. It examines the problems of the increasingly severe shortage of qualified teachers in American higher education and the need to recruit large numbers of new faculty during the next decade and, as the potential solution to both problems, the recruiting of women to fill these faculty positions. Discussions include responses to the following questions: (1) whether women are an underutilized resource for new faculty; (2) if gender discrimination still exists in higher education; (3) if there are differences in scholarly productivity between men and women; and (4) how women manage the conflicts between family and career. The report makes the points that women have higher attrition rates and slower career mobility in higher education than their male counterparts; that a form of gender discrimination does still exist; that there is no evidence to suggest that women are less scholarly or productive than men; and that today, both men and women experience problems in balancing family and career with little support from their universities. Ten steps are presented that universities can take to increase gender equity (e.g., stop the tenure clock for 1 year for the birth or adoption of a child or a severe family crisis). Contains eight references. (GLR)

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Realizing Gender Equality in Higher Education: The Need to Integrate Work/Family Issues

by Nancy Hensel

American higher education is facing a severe shortage of qualified teachers at the same time that it is under pressure to diversify its faculties. Colleges and universities must recruit an estimated 335,000 new faculty to meet needs in the next decade, and yet declining enrollments at the nation's graduate institutions suggest that those with doctorates will be in short supply. Qualified minorities will be even scarcer, since nonwhites remain underrepresented in both undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Are Women an Underutilized Resource for New Faculty?

There exists, however, one underutilized minority group which offers a potential solution to both problems. Women constitute 50 percent of undergraduate enrollments yet remain broadly underrepresented in tenured faculty positions.

While the status and representation of women in academe has improved since the 1960s resurgence of the women's movement, women faculty remain underrepresented on most campuses. Several recent studies (Justus, Freitag, and Parker 1987; University of Virginia 1988) found that women comprised about one-fourth of the faculty but only about one tenth of the tenured, full professors. Furthermore, the attrition rate among women in academe is higher and women who stay take two to ten years longer for promotion than their male counterparts. Increasing the numbers of female faculty may be the best solution to the predicted teacher shortage; however, we must first address the issues of higher attrition and slower career mobility for women in higher education.

Gender Discrimination: Does It Still Exist?

When gender discrimination exists, it is often subtle and systemic. Academia has long been dominated by men, and the male perspective in policy development, performance evaluation, and interpersonal interactions generally prevails. Student evaluations indicate that women's classroom performance is often evaluated more critically than men's. Research by women or about women is frequently undervalued by male colleagues. Initial salary differentials between men and women increase in favor of men as faculty progress through the ranks. Women take two to ten years longer than men to achieve promotion and tenure; women's greater child care responsibilities may account for some of this differential. Each of these issues leads to a cumulative disadvantage for the female professor. Women who earn doctorates are more likely than men to desire an academic career but are not being hired at equal rates; the cumulative disadvantage also results in women leaving the profession in greater numbers than men.

Are There Differences in Scholarly Productivity Between Men and Women?

There are those who suggest that women are less capable, less competitive, or less productive than men and that these characteristics account for the scarcity of women in higher ranks. While the question of gender difference in scholarly productivity is complex, the evidence suggests that women are as capable and as productive as men in the academic arena. A recent study of highly productive scholars of both sexes (Davis and Astin 1987) found that differences did exist in the type of publication but not in the quality or quantity of work.

Few studies have examined the relationship between marriage and scholarship or parenthood and scholarship. Results of studies which did consider family issues were mixed. In some cases marriage had no effect on women's scholarship, and in other cases it had a positive effect. Parenthood seemed to make scholarly activity more difficult for men and women. No study was found which asked women how they felt about the choices they had made to maintain their scholarly productivity.

How Do Women Manage the Conflicts Between Family and Career?

Nearly one half of the women who stay in academe remain either single or childless, which raises the question of how work/family conflicts influence the choices women make. Women who choose to have children are often pursuing tenure during the peak of their childbearing years. Often, colleagues and universities are not supportive of a woman's choice to be both parent and professor. A faculty career is demanding; the average professor works 55 hours per week. When child care and home responsibilities are added, a woman can work 70 or more hours per week.

Conflicts arising from opposing career and family responsibilities are no longer restricted to women in the workplace. A growing number of men who chose to be highly involved in childrearing are now entering the workforce and

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are experiencing added stress. Additionally, men in dual career relationships can no longer expect the career and family support offered by traditional wives. Interviews with men and women faculty reveal that both are experiencing stress in balancing careers and families and are finding their universities largely unresponsive.

What Can Universities Do?

The climate of college and university campuses that has prevented women from achieving their full potential must change if higher education is to resolve issues of faculty diversity and the impending shortage of qualified teachers. Formal and informal policies which consider the needs of diverse individuals, including the feminine perspective in expectations for faculty, must be broadly adopted and enforced. The following are suggested steps:

1. Address inequities in hiring, promotion, tenure, and salaries of women faculty.
2. Conduct a family responsiveness evaluation of university policies and practices to determine the level of support available to parents and others in a caregiving role and to eliminate factors which add to work/family conflict.
3. Develop a recruitment and hiring policy which is responsive to dual-career couples. A placement program for faculty spouses is one option.
4. Adopt a maternity policy which takes into account the special role of faculty. It is difficult for a woman professor to leave teaching if childbirth occurs in the middle of the semester. Students need consistency in faculty expectations of work and evaluation. The university should find ways of making alternative assignments during the semester of birth so that students do not have to adjust to a new professor midterm. Additionally, deans and other faculty must be made aware of maternity leave policies and support the woman's right to a leave. Maternity leave must be made viable for women faculty.
5. Adopt a family leave policy and encourage new parents to take advantage of it. Neither mother nor father should feel pressure not to use the allotted family leave. Allow a minimum of three months and make it paid, if possible. Maintain fringe benefits during the parental leave whether or not it is paid. Make family leave available for the care of a sick child, spouse, or elderly parent. Define **family** broadly to include all family configurations.
6. Allow new parents options to reduce their teaching load or committee assignments for the semester or year following childbirth or adoption. Make similar options available for other types of family leave.
7. Stop the tenure clock for one year for the birth or adoption of each child or for severe family crises. Stopping the tenure clock should not be viewed in a negative manner at the time of tenure review.
8. Study the feasibility of providing on-campus child care. If universities are large enough, they should be able to support a child care facility. Finding adequate child care is a major concern of parents. Leaving a young child some distance from work is stressful.
9. Recognize that employees have a life outside of the university by reducing the number of early morning, late evening, and Saturday obligations.
10. Reexamine the teaching and research expectations for all faculty. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect faculty to be effective teachers and researchers in light of the changes in the family. Institutions might consider hiring faculty members in either primary research positions or primary teaching positions and evaluate them accordingly.

In academic work there is a high correlation between career and life satisfaction. The university, more than other places of employment, is highly influenced by life outside of work. In addition, universities are training grounds for future leaders and need to offer an effective model on how to balance family and career. Institutions must recognize that children are not only an individual responsibility but are also a social responsibility. Universities which seek creative solutions to the underrepresentation of women in higher education and career/family conflict will also solve the problem of recruiting qualified faculty during a faculty shortage. More importantly, they will be making a significant contribution to the development of a new social order which values the care and nurturing of children and others and the role of caregiver.

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